



## **GOVERNOR KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO**

### **LOUISIANA'S PATH TO PROGRESS AND PROMISE**

### **2006 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

#### **Increasing Teacher Pay**

*"If Louisiana is truly going to rescue our children from the grips of poverty, then education is their lifeboat." Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco*

- Hurricane Katrina exposed the severity of Louisiana's poverty to the nation and the world. Our legacy of poverty is directly linked to our history of poor education. We cannot fully recover from this disaster if we let our education system fall apart.
- A strong public school system is the foundation of a strong, diversified economy.
- Strong schools full of students prepared to learn and staffed with talented, empowered educators create class after class of educated young men and women ready for success in the modern economy.
- The storms hit our higher education and research community hard. We know these educators and researchers are vital to our efforts to create a thriving economy. There has not been a general faculty pay raise since 2001. Our talented professors are being recruited by other states and we must not tolerate any acts of intellectual looting from Louisiana.
- Governor Blanco proposes an average \$1,500 pay raise per certificated teacher.  
**(HB 1 Alario)**
- Governor Blanco proposes an approximate 5% higher education faculty pay increase.  
**(HB 1 Alario)**
- Recurring funding is provided in HB 1 and does not require an increase in revenue.

#### **Paving the Road Home**

*"There is no greater challenge facing Louisiana's recovery process than rebuilding the communities in the affected region and getting our people back home." Gov. Blanco*

- Governor Blanco will submit a series of resolutions to the Louisiana Legislature requesting approval to submit to HUD detailed spending plans for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for hurricane recovery.
  - The Resolutions will detail the spending of the following components of the Road Home Housing Program:
    - \$4.37 billion of CDBG funds and approximately \$1.05 billion of Hazard Mitigation funds.
    - Governor Blanco and President Bush are advocating the appropriation of an additional \$4.2 billion of CDBG funding dedicated to housing redevelopment. If and when Congress makes that appropriation an additional amendment to the Supplemental CDBG action plan will be required to expand The Road Home Housing Program.

- The Road Home Housing Program ensures that:
  - Neighborhoods are rebuilt pursuant to locally driven plans that emphasize safety and reduce risks in rebuilding;
  - Homes are rebuilt using safer and smarter construction methods that meet the state uniform construction code and FEMA advisory base flood elevations;
  - Neighborhoods are rebuilt in a manner that promotes mixed use and mixed income communities; and
  - Housing opportunities are provided for households with special needs such as the elderly and those with disabilities.
- The Louisiana Housing Preservation Act will assist municipalities in redeveloping their communities in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (**HB 1071 Hunter**)
  - The receivership process creates a partnership between property owners and local governments **to rehabilitate residential property without impacting ownership.**
  - Local governments are responsible for identifying property that is below minimum habitability standards, blighted or abandoned.
  - Owners can also voluntarily place their property in receivership and participate in the redevelopment process.
  - Owners are returned control and possession of the property at the end of the receivership term and they can petition for reinstatement of control and possession at any time during the term.

## **Advancing Louisiana's Emergency Management System**

*"Louisiana is writing the book on lessons learned from a catastrophe. I insist on accountability. We must adopt bold reforms if we are to correct deficiencies in our emergency management system and give responders the tools they need to save lives." Gov. Blanco*

- During the summer of 2005, Louisiana suffered the devastating effects of the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States.
- The Governor's 2006 package includes legislation to provide the statutory authority necessary for a more efficient and effective response during future disasters and to improve governmental efficiencies post disaster.
- Amendments to Disaster Act to provide for a more efficient response and recovery including ensuring continuity of government, requiring detailed local evacuation plans and requiring a unified incident command structure within each parish. (**HB 1191 Thompson and SB 661 Barham**);
- Temporary credentialing of out-of-state health care and law enforcement professionals to ensure an efficient process for utilizing volunteer emergency responders. (**HB 747 K. Carter and HB 846 Dorsey**);
- Creation of State Medical Examiner to coordinate functions of local coroners during states of emergency and mass fatalities. (**SB 571 McPherson**);
- Regulate responsibility for the evacuation of nursing home residents in the path of natural disasters to ensure the safe evacuation of our vulnerable citizens (**HB 848 Winston and SB 529 L. Jackson**);
- Provide a change in the time period (from five to two years) when one is absent, no body found, as a result of a disaster before family can have a person declared deceased. Will allow families of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita victims to more timely initiate legal proceedings such as successions. (**HB 309 Walker and HB 655 Gray**);

- Incorporate into law the provisions of a gubernatorial executive order regarding the temporary housing of displaced inmates during an emergency (**HB 847 Martiny**);
- Authorize Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to close hunting and fishing seasons during a state of emergency (**HB 825 St. Germain**);
- Amend Right to Know law to require companies to provide information to DEQ about the location of hazardous materials in the immediate aftermath of disasters in order to protect response and recovery workers and the general public (**SB 172 Fontenot**).

## **Energizing our Workforce and Empowering Business Growth**

*“The future revitalization of Louisiana businesses post hurricanes demands a vibrant, trained and educated workforce more than ever before.” Gov. Blanco*

- To build a knowledge-based and skilled pool of workers, the Governor’s executive budget includes \$2 million for a pilot program to keep our high school juniors and seniors in school while preparing them for the workforce or continuing their education. This dual enrollment program will allow about 6,700 high school juniors and seniors to enroll in technical and college courses to earn college credit while finishing high school. (**HB 1 Alario**)
- Appropriation of state general funds to enhance economic development progress (**HB 1 Alario**):
  - \$6 million to establish the Economic Development Matching Grant program
  - \$4.57 million for land acquisition and site planning for a Megasite (funded in Capital Outlay budget)
  - \$10 million to continue the Rapid Response Fund
  - \$15 million for the development of our construction workforce
  - \$750,000 for the Microenterprise Initiative, in the Department of Social Services, to help citizens become economically self-sufficient
- The Governor proposes to restore the balance needed between economic development and the environment. Legacy lawsuits have disrupted the balance, stalling oil and gas exploration, creating an uncertain business climate, and leaving old oil and gas sites damaged.. The Governor proposes to require consistent environmental clean-up standards be applied and require court oversight of the clean-up to ensure the environmental damages are completely addressed. This arrangement will give businesses operating in the state greater certainty regarding potential liability for environmental damage and provide for an effective balance between economic development, property rights and environmental quality. (**SB 655 Adley and HB 1177 Daniel**)
- Provide businesses the option of using an expedited DEQ permitting process. Attractive economic development provision for businesses looking to get new projects or repairs started quickly. All legally mandated public notice and comment requirements will remain in place. (**SB 292 Fontenot and HB 870- Damico**)
- Governor Blanco will submit a series of resolutions to the Louisiana Legislature requesting approval to submit to HUD detailed spending plans for federal Supplemental Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for hurricane recovery including \$1.1875 billion for state and local infrastructure and \$332.5 million for short and long term economic recovery. (**SCR 19 Hines**)

## Streamlining Local and State Government

*“An important part of the rebuilding process for New Orleans is taking bold steps to reorganize city and parish governments to improve efficiencies.” Gov. Blanco*

- Elimination of layers of bureaucracy will demonstrate the state and city’s commitment to rebuilding stronger and smarter.
- Establishment of one Assessor for the Parish of Orleans (**SB 141, SB 647 Duplessis**);
- Reorganization of city and parish government (**SB 631 Mount**):
  - Creating a single district court for Orleans Parish;
  - Providing for a single Clerk of Court for Orleans Parish;
  - Merging the powers, duties and functions of the office of Recorder of Mortgages for the Parish of Orleans with the single Clerk of Court office for the Parish of Orleans;
  - Merging the powers, duties and functions of the office of Register of Conveyances for the Parish of Orleans with the single Clerk of Court office for the Parish of Orleans;
  - Merging the powers, duties and functions of the office of Custodian of Notarial Records for the Parish of Orleans with the single Clerk of Court office for the Parish of Orleans;
  - Establishing one Sheriff for the Parish of Orleans.

## Healing our Healthcare System

*“Reforming the state’s health care delivery system is complex. We must look beyond legislative fixes. We should also strive for strong administrative policy and funding reform to complement our legislative changes.” Gov. Blanco*

- Create the office for aging services within DHH to coordinate and deliver long term care services to the elderly and individuals with adult on-set disabilities (**SB 562 Bajoie**);
- Establish regional human service districts across the state to empower local communities to govern the delivery of health care services (**HB 687 M. Jackson**);
- \$1 million for a program to encourage E-prescribing, which is the electronic transmittal of physicians’ prescriptions to pharmacies (**HB 1 Alario**);
- \$3.5 million in the Office of Public Health for environmental health services to include safe drinking water (**HB 1 Alario**);
- Increase Interagency Transfers from Medicaid by \$5.3 million in the Office of Public Health for personal health services to include immunizations (**HB 1 Alario**);
- Provide \$2.9 million for behavioral health services in school-based health clinics (**HB 1 Alario**);
- Resolution on electronic health records;
- Resolution supporting U.S. Veterans Administration and LSU Memorandum of Understanding on potential partnership on new hospital in New Orleans.

## Caring for Our Environment

*"Our children deserve a future that is free of the dangerous effects of mercury products." Gov. Blanco*

- The Mercury Risk Reduction Act will reduce environmental mercury by encouraging the establishment of effective state and local waste reduction, recycling, and management programs (**SB 615 Fontenot**).
  - Manufacturers of mercury products must notify DEQ of a product's distribution, properly label products and establish a collection system for products containing mercury.
  - Certain mercury products are banned and improper disposal of waste-containing mercury is banned.

## Protecting and Educating our Children

*"Louisiana must continue to elevate the protection and education of our children as a top state priority." Gov. Blanco*

- \$13 million for DSS to launch a voluntary child care rating system to ensure our children are receiving safe, quality child care services (**HB 1 Alario**);
- \$16 million for DSS for Child Protection Investigation and Family Services and \$1.5 million to address domestic violence. \$3 million to DSS for increased funding for the After School Tutorial program, raising that commitment from \$9.5 million to \$12.5 million. Provide \$945,000 increase for the LSU Truancy program, bringing total TANF funding to \$1.6 million (**HB 1 Alario**);
- Statewide, a total of \$75.5 million is budgeted in three state agencies for Louisiana's nationally acclaimed Pre-K LA4 Program for at-risk four year olds (**HB 1 Alario**);
- \$4.1 million for stipends for 828 nationally certified teachers and a \$700,000 8(g) award from Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for this program (**HB 1 Alario**);
- \$950,000 for "Jobs for Louisiana Graduates," a drop-out prevention program and major component in the High School Redesign Initiative (**HB 1 Alario**);
- For statewide K-12 Literacy Plan, a new initiative designed to address the learning needs of all students PreK-Adult Education: \$4.3 million in state general funds, \$1.8 million in 8(g) grants; a \$520,000 award from the National Governors Association; and various federal grants (**HB 1 Alario**).

## Enhancing Higher Education

*"Investing in higher education will yield a more educated workforce for Louisiana and result in economic development opportunities for our research institutions." Gov. Blanco (**HB 1 Alario**)*

- \$10 million in State General Fund to help Louisiana's public postsecondary education institutions meet the challenges related to uncertain enrollment levels due to the impact of the hurricane disasters (**HB 1 Alario**);
- \$37.1 million in State General Fund is budgeted to cover increases in operating costs at all higher education institutions;
- \$2 million in State General Fund is provided for Louisiana's Independent Colleges and Universities, to cover a small portion of the cost for over 12,000 Louisiana students who attend one of these institutions;
- \$478,000 in state General Fund is budgeted for Distance Learning Select grants;
- \$308,000 in state General Fund is budgeted for the Gene Therapy Initiative. The total funding for the Initiative will be \$3.1 million.